

Against the Grain

Volume 20 | Issue 5

Article 35

November 2008

Bet You Missed It -- Press Clippings -- In the News -- Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

Bruce Strauch
The Citadel

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Recommended Citation

Strauch, Bruce (2008) "Bet You Missed It -- Press Clippings -- In the News -- Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths,"
Against the Grain: Vol. 20: Iss. 5, Article 35.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.5213>

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their emphases (not just technology but the users for whom we use technology in improving and expanding services) are providing fresh approaches to how we serve our public and each other, fresh approaches, in other words, to how we do our jobs.

Do the new graduates bring the experience of 35 years? Of course not, but many bring diverse life experiences that serve us all well and we all have to gain experience on the job where our real education begins.

In addition to empirical evidence gathered in the workplace, I have learned a lot about LIS programs by visiting them on external review panels that COA appoints to be its eyes and ears during re-accreditation cycles and by serving for four years on the **Committee on Accreditation** and reviewing each of the 62 programs annually through statistical reporting and through biennial reports. In addition, a four year term means a full review of more than half of the 62 programs (at least 32).

I learned that all programs are not equal in quality just as all universities are not equal in quality but quality is fleeting and subjective. It is risky and wrong-headed to judge individuals by their institutions even as we make broad assumptions and accept, if we are the recipients, the various ranking of schools and programs that continue to be used as marketing devices no matter how spurious they are.

LIS programs reside within institutions whose missions are greatly disparate, hence disparate LIS programs. When the **ALA Office for Accreditation** is consulted by prospective students wanting to know which is the best library school, they are told that the best program for them depends on many factors and that they need to enquire directly of the programs to see how their needs can be met.

How can you help maintain high quality LIS education? You can volunteer to serve on an external review panel (<http://www.ala.org/ala/accreditation/accreditation.cfm>), you can fill out an ALA volunteer form to serve on COA, and you can contact your own LIS program and ask to serve on its advisory board or serve in some other capacity to stay in touch and suggest ways of keeping up with changing times.

Education does not end with the awarding of an accredited master's degree. There is on-the-job training, there are continuing education opportunities (for teaching and learning) at national, state, and regional conferences, and there is professional reading and writing that let us learn while sharing ideas and experiences.

A couple of years ago I was a participant in a forum on education where the theme was "The Crisis in Library Education." No evidence whatsoever was introduced that justified or explained this battle cry because no hard evidence exists. On the contrary, based on what I have seen of programs and program reviews that include assessments from students, graduates, and employers, we may be in a golden age of library education but are too close to it to see it. 🍌

Rumors from page 82

Talk about resourceful and "green" (not just a name!) — Look at what **Kingsley Greene** <green@sage.edu> (Director, Libraries, **Sage Colleges**) has done with some NUCs! Made a loveseat. See his interview, this issue, p.58.

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Bet You Missed It

Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

Column Editor: **Bruce Strauch** (The Citadel)

Editor's Note: Hey, are y'all reading this? If you know of an article that should be called to **Against the Grain's** attention ... send an email to <kstrauch@comcast.net>. We're listening! — **KS**

SOCIAL NETWORKING THRU WRITING PULP by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

The group-written potboiler *Naked Came the Stranger* was a best seller in 1969. Now **WEbook** is going to specialize in collaborative novels. They hope to capture 5-10% of the \$50 billion a year US publishing market. They have 700 members working on 58 projects. And with novels pecked out and read on cell phones becoming best sellers in Japan, who knows where this could go?

See — **Daniel Lyons**, "Byte-Size Books," *Forbes*, May 5, 2008, p.52.

PLUTOCRACY AND CONSOLATORY DEBAUCHERY by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Bad boy publishing mogul **Felix Dennis** is the creator of all college guys' favorite reading *Maxim*. He began his lucrative career with *Oz* which got him brief jail time for obscenity; cashed in on the death of **Bruce Lee** with *Kung Fu Monthly*; before concocting the formula for the lad magazine that soared beyond the languishing skin magazine standards.

He sold *Maxim* for \$240 million, but still owns *The Week* and 50 other titles among which are a slew of computer magazines.

The London *Times* estimates his wealth at \$1.5 billion, but he says it's much less due to his LST or Lifetime Spending Total. He says his pursuit of vast wealth "led me into a lifestyle of narcotics, drink, and consolatory debauchery."

See — **Jon Fine**, "How to Get Rich — and Notorious," *Business Week*, June 9, 2008, p. 85.

WILL LEGAL RESEARCH BECOME EASY? by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Lawyers prepare cases by searching old cases for precedent. Circa 1800, **John West** founded **Westlaw** to compile US cases into "reporters." Today, big law firms will shell out \$4 million a year for **Lexis** and **Westlaw**.

Then young lawyers, **Philip Rosenthal** and **Edward Walters** noticed that courts were posting filings online and decided to found a rival. Eight years later they have **Fastcase**, an online legal-research service. They only have \$10 million a year in revenue, dwarfed by **Lexis Westlaw's** \$6.5 billion, but they have found a niche serving small firms that can't afford the big guys.

But at the same time, others are on the same mission: **PreCydent**, **Public.Resource.org**, and **Collexis Holdings' Casemaker** division. **PreCydent** is using software algorithms to replicate human research analysis in the same fashion of **Google's** software.

See — **Daniel Fisher**, "Open-Sourcing The Law," *Forbes*, June 30, 2008, p. 70.

MAKING ACADEME PAY OFF by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Kenneth Thygerson had a high flying career in finance but finally got worn out by quarterly reports and the push to perform. He hit on the idea of online training for corporate employees and launched **Digital University** in 1998.

Turn-over is high in entry level jobs and companies need inexpensive training. His school charges from \$5 to \$60 per employee and the 170 course offering includes everything from stress management to advanced financial math. Classes run from 30 to 90 minutes.

See — **Dennis Nishi**, "Trading the Finance World for Academia," *The Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 5, 2008, p.D5.



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A COLLEGE IS A TERRIBLE PLACE TO WASTE by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

What you've known for a long time, but now people are starting to say out loud. College is as big a joke as high school, prolonging adolescence and sending students utterly unprepared into the job market.

Student evaluation of faculty has the cowed profs avoiding all confrontation and providing feel-good grading systems. Colleges pander to immature whims via Tuesday and Thursday classes only, lavish facilities and large bureaucracies of "res life staff."

The author's suggestion? Hold your money and college for later. Put the kid in some semi-meaningful experience. The wait will be a gain. "Plato and Tolstoy were not writing for kids."

See — Charles Murray, "College Daze," *Forbes*, Sept. 1, 2008, p.32.

GERMANS GO JAZZY by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

German newspapers face the same ad revenue decline as America's, but are thriving. A lag in German readers embracing the Web allowed them to learn from American mistakes. Once stodgy papers developed tabloid editions and color photos and more original content.

They allow their Websites to be portals with unlimited surfing and downloads. They all compete nationwide so they didn't suffer the monopolistic complacency of America's big city dailies.

See — Jack Ewing, "Where Newspapers Are Thriving," *Business Week*, Aug. 25/Sept. 1, 2008, p.94.



SOCIAL NETWORKING YOUR WAY TO FAME AND FORTUNE by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Stephanie Meyer, 34-year-old mother of three has hit it huge with her *Twilight* series (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers). The latest — *Breaking Dawn* — has an initial print run of 3.2 million copies. Vampire guy meets teenage girl and they fall in love. Sort of. He also wants her blood. Which for young girls seems to symbolize sex.

Part of the secret of her success — the first social networking best seller. Go to **StephanieMeyer.com** to check it out.

Meanwhile, publishers have doubled the number of new titles in one year, yet revenues remain flat.

See — Heather Green, "Harry Potter With Fangs — And A Social Network," *Business Week*, Aug. 11, 2008, p. 42.

THEY'RE ALL THAT? by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

The usual biz mag article about a new CEO — **Mary Berner** — who's going to turn around **Reader's Digest Association**, a \$2.8 billion media conglomerate. But of interest because the company is so much more than the ailing but still eight million circ (once 17 m) *U.S. Digest*. There's RD International with *Digest China (Puzhi)*; a School and Ed Service division that includes five million circ *Weekly Reader*; Home & Garden, Health & Wellness with the 1.2 million circ *Handyman*; Food & Entertaining Div with 1.7 million circ *Every Day With Rachel Ray*.

See — Richard Morais, "Impatience," *Forbes*, June 16, 2008, p.128.